

Town of Hopkinton
Budget Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 9, 2015
5:30 p.m.
Town Hall
APPROVED

Call to Order:

Chairwoman Janet Krzyzaniak called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Attendees: Janet Krzyzaniak, Don Houston, Ken Traum, Richard Horner, Amy Bogart, Virginia Haines, Deborah Norris, Richard Houston, Diana Wieland, and Bill Chapin, Jr., School Board representative. Also present: Neil Cass, Town Administrator, Deb Gallant, Finance Director, and Suzanne Beauchesne taking minutes.

Others in Attendance: School Superintendent Steve Chamberlin, Dave Luneau, Jodie Russell, Sue Strickford Select Board Member.

Chairwoman Krzyzaniak welcomed the newest committee member, Diana Wieland, representing the Hopkinton Village Precinct.

Report from School Superintendent

Bill Chapin welcomed and thanked School Superintendent Steve Chamberlin, for attending the meeting to respond to committee members questions about class sizes.

Superintendent Chamberlin stated that the school curriculum is regulated by local and state standards. The New England Association of Colleges prescribes some things; for example, if the district reduces its guidance staff, the association must be informed. Local policies are determined by a 21st Century Learning Committee and there are graduation requirements mandated by the NH Department of Education. Superintendent Chamberlin provided a listing of the graduation requirements broken out by subject and totaling 24 units. Superintendent Chamberlin talked about the School Board's philosophy that all students have equal access to the "best" instructional programs. Best Practices are focused on the "Magnificent 7" of:

- 1) Care
- 2) Visible Learning
- 3) Pre-Assessment
- 4) Variety of Researched Based, Effective Practices
- 5) Abundance of High Quality Feedback
- 6) Voice and Choice
- 7) Growth Mindset

Superintendent Chamberlin said that a Curriculum Council oversees curriculum changes. He distributed a booklet entitled “Program of Studies” that provided expectations for student and teacher performance, recommended programs, academic load, and course descriptions.

Superintendent Chamberlin said that preparing a Master Schedule is a challenge, since budget development starts in October and teacher contracts are not done until April 15th before “we know how many sections we’ll need” or how many students will be interested in a particular course.

According to Superintendent Chamberlin, class size is determined by several factors, described above and including teachers and classrooms; and the number of students is influenced by a number of factors such as pre-requisites and guidance. Many classes at Hopkinton High are offered simultaneously. A seasoned instructor can teach a different course simultaneously. There are no classrooms that can hold 35 students. A student may take up a course as Independent Study, provided a number of requirements are met. Eighteen Independent Studies are allocated in the budget. VLACS (Virtual Learning Academy) courses are free and must meet NH State standards, since they are paid by State funds based on enrollment. VLACS is the only online program that Hopkinton High School recognizes for credit on its transcript. Students may take up to four VLACS courses for credit during the student’s high school career. Courses must be pre-approved by Guidance and Administration. Superintendent Chamberlin spoke about “economy of scale” and how language based courses, funded through special education, have to be taught differently.

Amy Bogart asked how many credits are assigned through AP and VLACS courses and how those credits are interpreted by colleges. Superintendent Chamberlin said credits that are accepted are specific to the college and he did not know how they were interpreted.

Superintendent Chamberlin said that “we believe in our school every child should be challenged”. Many 5th graders who can do freshman math, we believe, should not be stopped. Richard Houston asked if the “capstone” experience continues no matter how many students may be interested. The Superintendent said the “capstone” project remains available to students even if only a small number of students opt for it. Don Houston asked when and why students leave the Hopkinton School. Superintendent Chamberlin responded that typically eighth and ninth graders leave for science, religion, or hockey. Three families would have left if Hopkinton had no football program.

Chairwoman Krzyzaniak thanked the Superintendent. Dave Luneau encouraged Budget Committee members to ask any and all questions they may have.

CIP Committee Presentation:

Don Houston reported on the CIP Committee's process and decision making and referred to the recommendations included in the budget packet. CIP Committee recommendations totaled \$1,218,444, a \$120,371, or 10.96%, increase over last year's total appropriations. Mr. Houston again encouraged the Select Board to decrease the East Penacook Road Bridge Warrant Article to \$250,000.

Discussion on Municipal Budget:

Chairwoman Krzyzaniak stated that townspeople cannot afford any more taxes. Ken Traum indicated that the town's budget was barebones with a minimal 27 cent, or 3.87% increase. Don Houston stated that taking \$50,000 from the East Penacook Road Bridge Warrant Article would lower the tax rate to 18.7 cents, or 2.7% increase. Mr. Traum said that it is difficult to know if other items might pop up over the next year. If so, funds raised from the additional \$5 motor vehicle charge may have to be utilized. Mr. Houston said he doesn't foresee needing a new bond and the infrastructure "is in good shape", with the exception of the road system.

Amy Bogart asked about a number of line items including Flood Control, Webster Transfer Station, recycling receipts, pay-by-bag revenue, and the recreation budget line item (account #4520). Mr. Traum and Town Administrator Neil Cass, responded that the Flood Control program is State regulated and based on the assessed value of land. Transfer Station revenue is down because the value of recyclables is tied to oil prices, which are down. Mr. Traum and Mr. Cass referred Ms. Bogart to pages 65-66 of the budget, which provides the detail requested on the Recreation budget.

Deborah Norris asked several questions, including: whether or not under Sewer Professional services if they go out to bid and the response was they have a private contractor; Why is the Transfer Station Revenue down and it was noted the income does not reflect the full year yet; and whether or not the Recreation Budget include any money for the proposed Sports Complex, with a response of no it does not.

Ginny Haines asked about town-owned property. Town Administrator Cass said that three properties with no deed were sold in 2015. The Town owns no empty houses. On properties with no mortgages, the Town can take possession after two years and one day. Once the Town becomes a landlord, the building must be brought up to code.

Rich Houston moved, second by Deborah Norris, to recommend that the warrant article for the East Penacook Road Bridge seek \$250,000 rather than \$300,000 as proposed by the Select Board. Motion passed 9-1 (Ken Traum opposed).

Approval of December 2, 2015 Meeting Minutes:

Ken Traum moved, seconded by Don Houston, to approve the December 2, 2015 meeting minutes, as amended. The motion passed unanimously, 10-0.

Public Comment:

Jodie Russell commented on the fire station lighting.

The Contoocook Village Precinct Profit and Loss statement through November 2015 was distributed. Chairwoman Krzyzaniak said she attended the School Board meeting last night and provided new slides where five items had to be changed, including an updated health insurance number.

Bill Chapin, Jr. passed along the preliminary School Budget, which will be provided in tiers and noting the ramifications of each tier. For Committee members' information and review, Don Houston shared researched information impacting the budget.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 6, 2016 at 5:30 p.m. at the Town Hall.

Adjourn:

Ken Traum moved, seconded by Don Houston, to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m. The motion passed unanimously, 10-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Beauchesne